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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

In its resolution 56/54 of 10 December 2001, the General Assembly reaffirmed the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes and endorsed the efforts of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure, to such persons. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report to it, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

The report refers to correspondence between the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representative of Israel regarding actions taken by the Government of Israel in implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution. It also presents the information made available by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to the Secretary-General on the return of refugees registered with the Agency to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from places outside the occupied Palestinian territory.

* A/57/150.

** The submission of the present report was dependent on the response from the relevant Member State, which was received on 16 August 2002.

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1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of paragraph 5 of its resolution 56/54 of 10 December 2001, entitled "Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities", the operative part of which read as follows:

> "*The General Assembly*,
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> "...
>
> "1. *Reaffirms* the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967;
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> "2. *Expresses deep concern* that the mechanism agreed upon by the parties in article XII of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements[1] on the return of displaced persons has not been effected, and expresses the hope for an accelerated return of displaced persons;
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> "3. *Endorses*, in the meanwhile, the efforts of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure, to persons in the area who are currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities;
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> "4. *Strongly appeals* to all Governments and to organizations and individuals to contribute generously to the Agency and to the other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned for the above purposes;
>
> "5. *Requests* the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General, to report to the General Assembly before its fifty-seventh session on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the present resolution."

2. On 27 June 2002, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any action his Government had taken or envisaged to take in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 15 August 2002, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

> "Israel's position on these resolutions has been set forth in successive annual replies submitted to the Secretary-General in recent years, the latest of which being Israel's note verbale of 30 July 2001. Israel regrets the fact that the resolutions regarding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remain rife with political issues irrelevant to the work for which UNRWA is responsible, and thus remain detached from the reality in the area. Accordingly, Israel abstained on resolution 56/55 and voted against resolutions 56/52, 56/54, 56/56, 56/57 and 56/58.
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> "While Israel continues to support UNRWA's humanitarian mission, it remains concerned regarding a number of issues related to UNRWA's conduct.

On several occasions, UNRWA has issued one-sided statements devoid of any recognition of the security context in which Israel operates or of Israel's legitimate right to take measures in defence of its citizens. Israel does not consider such statements helpful or conducive to a productive working relationship with UNRWA.

"UNRWA has also remained silent while an extensive infrastructure of Palestinian terrorism has taken root in Palestinian refugee camps. These terrorist activities are not only clear violations of Security Council resolutions, which require that the civilian character of refugee camps be maintained, but also directly endanger the lives of civilians residing nearby. While Israel recognizes that UNRWA does not have a mandate to enforce security and public order in the refugee camps, it does believe that UNRWA is in a position to draw attention to the misuse of refugee camps by armed elements in the interests of the safety and security of the civilian population, in line with Security Council resolutions adopted on this subject.

"Finally, UNRWA also must take care to ensure that its facilities, as well as the textbooks and other educational materials in use in its schools, do not glorify terrorism, incite young children to acts of violence or propagate anti-Semitic ideas and images.

"Israel continues to believe that UNRWA can play an important role in promoting the social and economic advancement foreseen in the agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, within the limits of its humanitarian mandate, and accordingly looks forward to continuing its cooperation and good working relationship with UNRWA.

"Israel urges the Secretary-General and UNRWA to consider, together with the parties concerned, ways in which the organization can enhance the fulfilment of its mandate in an accountable and responsible manner in the best interests of those whom UNRWA has been charged to serve."

4. In connection with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 56/54, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in previous reports on the subject, the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees, nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons who are not registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for transfer of their entitlements for services to the areas to which they have returned and subsequent correction of records. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the provision of services. So far as is known to the Agency, between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2002, 1,101 refugees registered with UNRWA returned to the West Bank and 173 to the Gaza Strip from places outside the occupied Palestinian territory. It should be noted that some of these may not themselves have been displaced in 1967, but may be members of the family of a displaced registered refugee. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 4 of last year's report (A/56/382), the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 22,900. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered

refugees and, as pointed out above, even those records, particularly with respect to the location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.

5. In connection with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 56/54, the Secretary-General refers to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002[2] and to the previous reports of the Commissioner-General for accounts of the continuous and ongoing assistance provided by UNRWA to persons displaced and in need of continued assistance.

Notes

[1] A/48/486-S/26560, annex.

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session*, Supplement No. 13 (A/57/13) (to be issued).